

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PINT, UK, EI
SUBJECT: VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND: PROBABLE LOYALIST
RETALIATORY KILLINGS

REF: BELFAST 041

1. LOYALIST COUNTER-TERROR: TWO MEN WERE KILLED MARCH 8
BY SUBMACHINE GUN FIRE FROM A MOTORCYCLE PASSENGER IN A
CROWDED STREET OF PORTADOWN, SOME 20 MILES WEST OF BELFAST.

ONE WAS CLAIMED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE IRISH NATIONAL
LIBERATION ARMY, A SPLINTER REPUBLIC AND PARAMILITARY
ORGANIZATION. HIS MOTHER AND A BROTHER WERE KILLED IN
1975, AND HIS FATHER SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. THE FAMILY OF THE
OTHER MAN REPORTEDLY SAID HE HAD NO POLITICAL LINKS.

2. INLA CLAIMED THE TWO HAD BEEN KILLED BY A LOYALIST/ARMY
(SAS - SPECIAL AIR SERVICE) UNIT, AND ONE PAPER RECEIVED A
CALL CLAIMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RED HAND COMMANDOS, A
LOYALIST PARAMILITARY GROUP. IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT
LOYALISTS KILLED THE MEN IN RETALIATION FOR RECENT
PROVISIONAL IRA TERRORIST ACTIONS. RATHER THAN THE
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TRADITIONAL TIT-FOR-TAT MURDERS, THIS WOULD BE A WELL
PLANNED "SELECTIVE RETALIATION" INVOLVING KNOWN REPUBLICANS
SYMPATHIZERS OR ACTIVISTS.

3. THE KILLERS COULD HAVE BEEN MAVERICKS, BUT PEOPLE FEAR THE
BEGINNING OF A LOYALIST CAMPAIGN. A SIMILAR, THUS FAR
UNEXPLAINED SHOOTING TOOK PLACE IN BELFAST MARCH 7.

4. PROVISIONAL IRA KILLINGS: A SOLDIER AND A CIVILIAN WOMAN SEARCHER WERE KILLED MARCH 3 AT A SECURITY BARRIER IN DOWNTOWN BELFAST. PIRA GUNMEN USED THE COVER OF HUNDREDS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN COSTUME IN A CARNIVAL ATMOSPHERE. ANOTHER SOLDIER DIED NEAR THE BORDER IN SOUTH ARMAGH WHEN A BOOBY TRAP EXPLODED WHILE HE WAS TAKING DOWN AN IRISH FLAG FROM A POLE. AND THERE WERE OTHER SHOOTINGS WITHOUT INJURY, A FEW FIRES, AND SOME KNEE CAPPINGS. ON THE LAST, ANOTHER SPLINTER GROUP, THE IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY, ACCUSED THE OFFICIAL IRA OF HAVING MUTILATED ONE OF ITS MEMBERS.

5. CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM CHARGES: REACTION HAS BEEN MIXED HERE TO THE DISPUTE BETWEEN SECRETARY OF STATE MASON AND REPUBLIC OF IRELAND OFFICIALS ON CHARGES THAT THE SOUTH IS HARBORING PIRA. UNIONISTS CHEERED MASON FOR CARRYING THE WAR TO THE ENEMY, AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOR PARTY LEADERS DEFENDED THE REPUBLIC. OTHERS COMMENT CYNICALLY THAT THE CHARGES ARE A RED HERRING INTENDED TO OFFSET CRITICISM OF MR. MASON FOR NOT GOING AFTER PIRA HARDER.

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